

Advice for Return to School

Many families are wondering what to do this upcoming school year in regards to COVID-19. Is it safe to send your child to school? Unfortunately, there is no one right answer to this question. The real answer is that it depends on the amount of COVID in the community, your children's risk factors, and your family's risk factors.

At this time, with cases still increasing in Arizona, it will be up to the AZ Dept of Health and the individual school districts to decide on a safe time table to return to school and the appropriate way to do so. Going back to school safely is not just about our own children's welfare but is also a balance of the safety of our community as a whole, the teachers, administrators, bus drivers, and support staff as well.

Here are some guidelines for when school is deemed safe to return:

For those children that are high-risk (immunodeficiency, heart or lung problems, etc.) and for those who live with family members that are high-risk (grandparents/elderly, chronic medical illnesses, obesity), it is especially recommended that those children stay at home and continue online/remote learning if possible.

However, we also understand that online/remote learning is not practical for everyone, including:

- Children with disabilities who receive resources and therapies through the schools that cannot be obtained at home
- Children who rely on school for their meals
- Children who do not have computers or internet at home for appropriate remote education
- Parents who must work outside of the home and cannot supervise their children

If your child will be attending school, the school will need to have appropriate safety measures in place based on the CDC school opening guidelines: facemasks worn by everyone over the age of 2 at all times except when eating and when social distancing is attainable as well as avoidance of large crowds (cafeterias, field trips, assemblies), etc.

While getting back to school is important, not just for our children's education but also for their mental health and social interaction, safety is of the highest priority at this time. The safest way for schools to open this fall is for us to decrease the rate of infection in our community now. Everyone (2 years and older) should be wearing a face covering whenever they leave the house. Please avoid touching your face and gathering in large groups. Practice good hand hygiene, stay at home when possible, and self-isolate when sick. Schools and work should be more flexible with absenteeism.

We are all hoping to get back to normal, but most importantly, we must keep our community safe. Please help our community by doing your part to decrease the spread of COVID-19.